

April 3, 2021

Dear Chairman Abney and Members of the House Committee on Finance,

I am writing in support of continuing the RI Promise program. As a twenty-year community college administrator, I can attest to the life-changing opportunities that the RI Promise program provides. Having worked in student services for eighteen years for the Connecticut Community College system before joining the CCRI Student Affairs team, I observed firsthand the often-insurmountable barriers that students face every day in pursuing or completing an education. For many, particularly those who would be the first in their families to attend college, the idea of being able to navigate the application, registration, financial and academic requirements to become a successful college student is perceived as out of reach. Despite the resources and support offered, we remained largely unsuccessful in Connecticut at closing the equity gap without the ability to provide the financial support required to offer all students an opportunity to attain an education. As every state's economic sustainability depends on cultivating an educated and skilled workforce, it is vital that every young citizen have access to the opportunity to earn an academic credential.

The RI Promise program is delivering the results that are changing the life trajectories of Rhode Island students. The promise of free college has inspired significantly more young people to apply to college as full-time students right out of high school than ever before in the state. As many of these students additionally receive federal Pell support, the Promise program effectively leverages federal funds to increase state rates of educational attainment. Because these students are engaging in full-time coursework and receiving resource support throughout their two-year programs, they are persisting and achieving their associate degrees – evidenced by the tripled graduation rates at CCRI. In addition, this success is paving the way for these students to transfer to our RI public partners and continue on to achieve bachelor's degrees.

The RI Promise program is a testament to Rhode Island's commitment to ensuring positive student success outcomes that are resulting in more Rhode Islanders earning degrees, sustainably moving the state forward. I urge you to support the continuation of the RI Promise program on Tuesday, April 6.

Sincerely,

Amy Kacerik  
Dean of Enrollment Management  
CCRI